

Disaster Mental Health Competencies

The following document establishes a list of mental health competencies and related knowledge and skills for Mental Health and Health Care Professionals and Para-professionals.

1. Describe the different types of man-made or naturally occurring disasters.

- Define disaster and terrorism and differentiate between man-made disasters and naturally occurring disasters
- Enumerate the physical, social and economic effects of disasters and terrorism

2. Identify the core actions in psychological first aid

- Understand the objectives of psychological first aid.
- Describe the eight core actions of psychological first aid

3. Understand the psycho-physiological effects of fear and terror.

- Cognitive responses
- Emotional reactions
- Behavioral changes
- Physical effects

4. Describe the components of psycho-physiological response to fear and terror in children and adults

- Understand the reaction of the nervous system to fear
- Describe the fight, flight, or freeze responses

5. Recognize the population at risk following disasters and describe how special populations may be affected

- Identify at risk populations
- Describe how at risk populations may be affected differently

6. Describe the different phases of response to disasters and their impact on recovery.

- Explain the heroic phase, the honeymoon phase, the inventory phase, the disillusionment phase and the recovery phase.

7. Describe the issues related to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive attacks including emergency response procedures and their potential mental health effects

- Explain the psychological impact of these agents of terrorism
- Describe the effects on children
- Understand the differences in decontamination, isolation, quarantine and infection control practices and how these effect people psychologically

8. Understand the cultural context of mental health responses to disasters and terrorism

- Understand the diverse reactions of different cultures to disaster and terrorism
- Be acquainted with appropriate methods in interacting with culturally diverse populations
- Identify the role of cultural elements in addressing mental health issues.

9. Know when referral to ongoing mental health services may be needed and how to identify community resources.

- Discern the importance of the issues of intensity and duration and impairment of activities of daily living.
- Understand issues leading to a mental health diagnosis and when a referral is needed to a community provider
- Consider how to develop a resource list of community mental health providers.

10. Describe stress management and team-care methods.

- Identify some self-care methods during a disaster response
- Describe team building methods and how to take care of each other